

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Wednesday, July 14, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 14, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES H. TAYLOR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Reverend Sam Whaley, Word of Faith Fellowship, Spindale, North Carolina, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray. Father God, we count it an honor to come before You on behalf of our Congress and leaders. We need You to be in control of our Nation. We are in desperate need of Your wisdom, Your will, and Your divine protection. We cry out for Your wisdom and courage to come to the hearts of our leaders so they will have strength to take a stand for righteousness. Cause them to be aware of how important it is to inquire of You before any decision is made since You and You alone place them in the authority to execute Your righteous judgments.

Father, forgive us. We as a Nation have not revered and inquired of You for our land to be healed. Have mercy on us. Put a heart of prayer in Your people. Thank You, Dear Lord. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MASCARA) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. MASCARA led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain 15 one-minute speeches on each side.

HELP THE MINING INDUSTRY; DO NOT ELIMINATE IT

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, the basis of our Nation's mining laws was enacted on May 10, 1872. Over the years, this law has become probably the most misrepresented statute on the books today.

This land tenure law governs access to public lands for mineral exploration and specifies the conditions under which title to mineral deposits can be obtained once they are discovered.

The 1872 law primarily affects the 12 western States in this Nation, and these 12 States account for 75 percent of the minerals produced and more than 92 percent of the public land of this Nation.

Before Congress enacts any significant new policies, we must carefully consider the effects and consequences that could adversely affect this valuable industry and dramatically reduce the quality of life for all Americans, which would further destroy tens of thousands of high-paying jobs if not done correctly.

The mining industry is already in danger due to an unending mudslide of Federal regulations, fees, and needless bureaucracy. Mr. Speaker, we have come to the point where we need to begin helping the mining industry instead of trying to eliminate it.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES

(Mr. MASCARA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MASCARA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join with me in sending a message to our senior citizens across this country that we in Congress are committed to cutting the cost of their prescriptions.

Many of the seniors that I spoke with during the July 4th break told me about the difficulties they are experiencing in paying for their prescriptions. Oftentimes they are being forced to make a choice between buying food or buying their medicine. It is a na-

tional disgrace that we in the wealthiest country in the world are having our elderly make that decision in the first place.

Cutting the dosage or doing without prescriptions eventually adds to the cost of health care. This is a no brainer. Join the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) and me in support of a House concurrent resolution dealing with this matter. I ask my colleagues to express their commitment to provide our Nation's seniors with fair and reasonable access to prescription drugs.

Our senior citizens have asked for our help, and it is now time to deliver. Now, not later.

FLORIDA KEYS

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the Florida Keys are made up of 100 miles of 30 islands that form a chain. Adjacent to the Keys is the most extensive living coral reef in North America and the third largest in the world.

These coral reefs are intertwined to a marine ecosystem that supports one of the most diverse and unique collections of plants and animals in North America.

Millions of people come from all over the United States and the world to visit the Florida Keys. This is both a blessing and a big part of the problem. The Keys are suffering from pollution brought about by humans.

Some of our beaches have already had to be closed over the July 4th weekend because of these contaminants. Even more crucial, the living coral reef is in danger of dying from pollutants if the water quality is not improved immediately.

I urge my colleagues, therefore, to preserve one of our national treasures, the Florida Keys, by acting on the bill of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTSCH), the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Act of 1999, H.R. 673.

AMERICAN BORDERS WIDE OPEN WHILE GUARDING BOSNIA AND KOSOVO

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, all heroin and cocaine comes across our borders, and everyone agrees that heroin and cocaine cause most of the crime, murder, and medical bills in America. And Congress does nothing.

While American soldiers are guarding the borders of Bosnia and Kosovo, American borders are wide open. And Congress does nothing. Beam me up, Mr. Speaker.

A Nation without secure borders is a Nation without security. A Congress that turns its back on our borders is a Congress that invites disaster.

I yield back the stupid un-American policies.

SURPLUS IS NOT PRESIDENT'S MONEY TO SPEND

(Mr. GARY MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GARY MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, last week when the President was in California, he was quoted in the newspaper as saying, "It would be wrong to spend our hard-earned surplus on tax cuts."

What the President meant by "our" was the government's. So he said it would be wrong to spend the government's hard-earned surplus on tax cuts. When did the government ever earn any money?

How would the President know what the private producing sector of our country can and cannot afford? His whole life he has worked for government. According to his own biography, the closest he ever came to being paid by the private sector is when he won a college scholarship. Even then, the government gave him a grant to supplement his tuition to Georgetown.

When the President says we cannot afford a tax cut, he only speaks from the perspective of government. He does not know any better. I will repeat, he does not know any better.

Well, as someone who has signed both sides of a paycheck, I can speak for the private sector when I say he is wrong. What we cannot afford to do is keep the surplus in Washington, D.C. to grow government. It is not the President's money. Let us send the American people's money back to the producing sector of our Nation, the American people.

CHILD GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

(Ms. DEGETTE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, in June, the House of Representatives had the opportunity to pass bipartisan moderate gun safety legislation. We had a chance to make this country a safer place, and we let it slip away.

Yesterday, again, we had the opportunity to add child gun safety legisla-

tion to the Treasury Postal appropriations bill. Three amendments were offered at the committee markup mirroring the Senate legislation which was passed in May. Unfortunately, all three of these amendments were defeated in committee.

The people of this country want child gun safety legislation. I have received many, many letters from mothers, fathers, teachers, ex-military officers, even Republicans urging me to do something, to make schools safer for all of the children and to keep guns out of the hands of children.

Tackling this problem of guns should not preclude the need to address our cultural problems. But we need to look at all of these issues to address child safety in this country. I urge my colleagues to do this before the August recess.

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION NOT PROVIDING SERVICES IT CLAIMS TO BE

(Mr. ARMEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, many years ago, the Congress of the United States, under the principle that all Americans, rich or poor, should have equal access to protection under the law through legal representation in the courts, created the Legal Services Corporation. This was designed to give the itinerant, the poor American without means, access to the courts.

We had hoped it would do a good job of service for the American people. Many of us have been surprised to discover the number of times we hear from constituents that they have been turned away from the Corporation. They did not have time for this person's case. So we began to ask what is going on. I have to tell my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, the results we are discovering are heartbreaking.

Reports from the Inspector General's office showed that the Legal Services Corporation grossly overstated their case load by 70 percent. But they have not told Congress.

Since Congress could no longer rely on timely, accurate information from LSC, we asked the General Accounting Office to look at five of LSC's largest grantees, Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and Puerto Rico. GAO found the same: LSC bloating the numbers, misrepresenting the number of people they actually assist.

At the very least, Congress needs to be able to trust the information government departments and agencies provide and that it is timely and accurate. Not only does LSC give Congress overstated caseload reports, they hide the truth and refuse to tell Congress. Personally, I find this insulting. The American people have a right to expect more from their government.

Mr. Speaker, it comes down to this: How can the Legal Services Corporation claim to be helping poor people when they do not even know how many people they are helping?

Mr. Speaker, when Congress expresses the compassion of the American people by providing a service to its very most poor and needy, those agencies must deliver those services, and they must be accountable to Congress.

Legal Services Corporation must be made to do their duty for the American people. We simply cannot fund that kind of misrepresentation of the Nation's goodwill.

MODEST GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION KILLED WITH BACKROOM ARM TWISTING

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Republican leadership killed modest gun safety legislation, not once, but three times. Backroom arm twisting by high-powered members of the NRA left the 13 members of the Committee on Appropriations switching their votes on sensible reforms.

We could have closed the loophole on background checks at gun shows, banned the importation of high-capacity ammunition clips, and ensured that all handguns come with child safety locks. But instead, there is no progress to report, only partisanship.

We have been waiting for months for the Republican leadership to act on this issue. Thirteen children are killed every day by guns. Yet, on this side of the aisle, we are stymied and stonewalled at every turn.

The Republican leadership is woefully out of step with American parents. Youth violence is a complex problem. It requires several answers. Parental involvement, safe schools, better discipline, and violence in the media are all involved, but gun safety is part of this puzzle. Now is the wrong time to do the bidding of the National Rifle Association.

I urge the Speaker, take up sensible measures passed by the Senate. Appoint conferees immediately. Acting now is the right thing to do. We have already waited too long, and too many youngsters have died.

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DEMOCRATS HAVE NO INTENTION OF WORKING WITH REPUBLICANS THIS YEAR ON ANYTHING

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)